Transgender

Hit! Annual Winter 1957.

By A. SMITH-H[illegible]ON, P[illegible]

American physicians believe that a psychiatrist's couch—not an operating table—is the place to treat people seeking sex change.

THE WEIRD PSYCHOLOGY OF *Sex* CHANGES

People who change their sex are in the clutches of a mysterious sickness originating in their minds

WHEN George Jorgenson stunned the world two years ago by announcing he had changed his sex (and his name to Christine), nobody—not even the former New York G.I.—could clearly explain why.

Dr. Christian Hamburger, one of the Danish physicians who attended Jorgenson, admitted that there were no hermaphroditic characteristics in his patient. The operation that received so much press publicity DID NOT, in actuality, change Jorgenson from a man into a woman. But—contended Dr. Hamburger —*surgery was performed to save this twenty-six-year-old American boy from possible suicide!*

The Danish physician described Jorgenson's condtion as transvestism—the desire to wear clothes of the opposite sex. Whereas Dr. Hamburger conceded that Jorgenson's trouble was not physical, he was mysteriously reluctant to emphasize *its real psychological causes!*

Why—physicians and psychiatrists in the United States and the rest of the world wanted to know —wasn't Jorgenson given proper psychiatric treatment?

The Danish doctors replied that the former G.I. was beyond help in this regard. Besides, they maintained that what is known in human psychology is not sufficient to cure transvestites.

THIS is not so, say some of the world's most famous psychiatrists. And here is why:

Dr. Sigmund Freud asserted that whenever the cause of an emotional disturbance can be uncovered, a cure is possible. And according to Dr. Otto Fenichel, there are several recorded instances of transvestitism being cured through intensive psychoanalytic therapy.

The disturbance which compels one to wear the clothes of the opposite sex is not uncommon. It is similar to—though not the same as —homosexuality.

History is replete with cases of this nature, dating as far back as the earliest Egyptians. Malinowski —perhaps the world's greatest anthropolgist—has described instances of transvestitism in primitive tribes of New Guinea, Africa, and South America.

According to Dr. Bruno Bettelheim, Director of the Chicago Orthogenic Clinic, the desire to be castrated stems from the same neurotic needs that create transvestitism. Surgical removal of the male glands would not cure this condition. It would, quite the contrary, make the original affliction incurable!

Christine Jorgenson, a former New York G.I., is probably the most celebrated sex change. U.S. medics deplored "unnecessary" surgery.

The sex-change operation is highly overrated, says Charlotte McLeod—a former New Orleans G.I. who underwent in Denmark an experience similar to Christine Jorgenson's.

In her article, "I Changed My Sex" (SIR! February), Miss McLeod states, "A man who has a masculine physique and an effeminate mind, who hopes to find an answer to his frustrations in surgery, is doomed to disappointment."

THE majority of psychiatrists believe that men seeking a sex change do not actually wish to become women—at least, not mature women. They are afraid to live as men. Through the operation, they retreat to the safe state of being little girls.

It is the belief of Dr. Bettelheim that men who seek castration seem to come from families where the mother is overly strong and domineering. They are afraid to live as men, because as long as they do so, their entire existence is threatened by the mother.

In his book, *Symbolic Wounds,*

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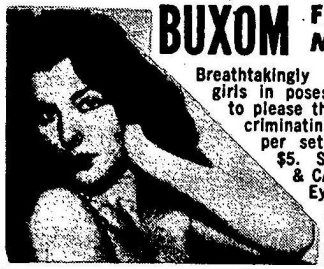

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THE WEIRD PSYCHOLOGY OF SEX CHANGES

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Dr. Bettelheim states, "The desire to possess a vagina may represent the identification with women, while the wish to excise the female sex organs seems to result from the hatred and anxiety generated by women and from the desire to overpower them."

Weird as it may seem, male jealousy of the female sex is quite common. This is particularly true, where mothers are overbearing and cruel toward their sons. Says Dr. Bettelheim:

"Experience with seriously disturbed and schizophrenic preadolescent children shows that the desire to be pregnant is as common among boys as among girls."

AMONG certain primitive tribes in British Guiana, the men act out their resentment of a woman's giving birth by means of a ritual called the couvade.

The strong and hardy wife works in the fields until a few hours before the child is to be born. When labor begins, she goes to a secluded place with women helpers and has her baby. A few hours after the birth, the wife is up and back to work.

The father, on the otherhand, as soon as the baby is born, takes to his bed, looks after the child, fasts and submits himself to purification. All that he will eat is an occasional unappetizing bowl of cassava meal. He will not smoke or handle weapons of any sort.

This ritual goes on for days—and sometimes weeks! During this time, the father is cared for and nursed by other women.

Not only does the couvade express the man's envy of the woman's maternity function—states Dr. Bettelheim—but this ritual is also a denial of the basic biological differences. The man wishes to convince himself that he can also have babies.

ANOTHER curious expression of this resentment exists among certain tribes of New Guinea. Just prior to the circumcision rites, when a boy is introduced to manhood, his male sponsor takes to wearing widow's weeds. The donning of such clothing is not intended to deceive. Everybody is aware of the fact that the sponsor is a man.

"The wearing of widow's clothes," says Dr. Bettelheim, "seems to assert that the boy has only one ritual mother, the man. The ceremonial mother is also characterized as pregnant, his abdomen being bound with string like that of a pregnant woman.

"Dressed thus, he wanders about the village looking for his 'child,' inquiring for him in a high-pitched, cracked (female) voice." After their circumcision, it is not unusual for boys to wear the clothing of little girls for months.

Dr. Bettelheim contends that it is the desire among many primitive people to play a double sexual role. In fact, some New Guinea tribes were discovered to own statues of gods possessing exagerated organs of the male AND the female. It is believed by these natives that the most masculine individual is able to perform the functions of BOTH women and men.

IN the United States, doctors are militantly opposed to permitting sex-change operations. Although American physicians have been under fire from many quarters as being "backward" and "inhumane," Dr. Hugo L. Kessler, formerly of Vienna and now of Paris asserts, "Such operations are nothing more than self-mutilation.

"To condone 'therapy' of this sort, one must fall into the position of advocating euthanasia. But the purpose of medicine is to heal —not kill."

In Amsterdam, Holland, Dr. Rudolf Rothschild said, "When it is so thoroughly apparent that the causes of transvestitism involve underdeveloped capacities of the patient to differentiate between the sexes; when this type of infantilism is behind cured by psychoanalysis, it is a pity—almost a crime—to give in to the patient's hostile wish to destroy himself."

Dr. Otto Werner of Cologne, Germany also supports the American physicians' refusal to permit sex-change operations. Says he: "Sexual aberrations have their cause rooted in current stresses as well as confused and underdeveloped emotions. Both can be corrected.

"It is a mistake not to distinguish

between cause and effect when dealing with the physical manifestations of emotional disorders. There appears to be no evidence that transvestitism is caused by any impairment to the cells of the body."

The psychology that drives people to seek sex changes is weird and complex. A cure—in the real sense of the word—is possible, but not through the much-publicized type of surgery that took place in Denmark.

THE END

THE BIZARRE SEX PRACTICES OF THE BLOOD INDIANS

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thereby are able to impose their wills upon the women.

"However, the ability of a woman to arouse such intense jealousy in a man is indication of a power she possesess *over him!* She can torment him in little ways to reduce his will to obey her whims."

Up to now, one of the devices by which Blood men have preserved themselves from female domination has been the practice of developing intimate friendships among themselves. Far from being homosexual, Blood males reassure and support one another in their relations with women.

There is, however, one element of confusion in the attitude of these Indians toward adultery. A man who sleeps with his friend's wife is not at fault—although the wife is.

Schildhammer asserts that "some psychoanalaysts might attach latent homosexual significance to these bizarre activities of Blood males. For my part, the value of such conjecture is purely theoretical. It would appear that the existence of the other male is to help consummate a relationship with the female.

"If it could be remembered that most Blood women basically reject men, the reassuring presence of the other male would be viewed not as a device to detract from the romance, but as something quite the contrary."

MANY anthropoligsts and psychologists view such lack of sexual privacy among the Blood Indians as infantile. When one looks at the way the children are raised, this lack of privacy in adulthood is not surprising.

An infant sleeps in the same bed with both parents, the mother lying in the middle. When a brother or sister is born, the first child moves to the foot of the bed. As the family increases, the older children move to another bed in the same room, the last-born sleeping with the mother and father.

Thus, you can see that Blood Indians are introduced to the facts of life at a shockingly early age. Furthermore, it is not the custom of the mother and father to demand privacy from their children during intimacies.

Normally, sex play between brothers and sisters is taboo. However, since little children are naturally imitative, it is not uncommon for youngsters to indulge in adult-like activities. As a result, such children's maladies as bed-wetting and nail-biting are not uncommon among the Blood Indians.

One of the reasons why the Bloods have not degenerated into homosexuality is that they are still an outdoor people. They are intensely sports-minded, and they have deep appreciation for sheer physical beauty in the opposite sex.

However, less and less of these Indians are acquiring—in the course of being civilized—the qualities they all admire.

According to anthropologists, their lives are becoming more inward and more complex. Their marriages are becoming more unsatisfactory. Today, a barren wife has no stigma attached to her.

There is less illegitimacy among the Bloods, now. Husbands are beginning to show a kindlier attitude toward their wives' children begotten by other men.

From a humane point of view, this is good. But, as Dr. Schildhammer points out, "It isn't the humaneness that has come to the Blood—rather it is the male pride that is leaving him.

"In an earlier day, it was difficult for a father to accept an illegitimate child, because the offspring reminded him of his wife's looseness. His repudiation of such a child affirmed his own ego."

As the Bloods continue to be civilized, their sexual problems will be further complicated, Dr. Schildhammer predicts. Yet, says the anthropologist, "Civilization produces its own complicated devices to solve the problems it creates."

THE END

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